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March 25, 2015

Rep. Art Wittich, Chairman
House Human Services Committee
Montana House of Representatives
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chairman Wittich and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

I strongly urge your support for Senate Joint Resolution 14, sponsored by Senator Thomas, which designates May, 2015 as ALS Awareness Month in Montana and also urges the federal government to provide additional funding for research in order to find a treatment and a cure for this disease.

Unfortunately, Lou Gehrig's Disease has touched my family twice. My mother died of ALS in 2002 and my wife, Pam Hillery, was diagnosed with it in July of 2013. While the prevalence of ALS is not overly significant (estimated to be 2-4 people per 100,000 population), its impacts are catastrophic and debilitating.

ALS is fatal in all cases and the life expectancy for someone with this disease is 2-5 years from diagnosis, with only 20% of those diagnosed living five or more years. My mother passed away only six months after her diagnosis and Pam is now quickly approaching the second anniversary of her diagnosis.

While ALS affects all races and both men and women, recent studies have indicated that it is twice as prevalent in veterans as non-veterans. Also, at any given time, there are an estimated 30,000 people in the United States struggling with Lou Gehrig's Disease.

The time has come to do everything we can to find a treatment, and ultimately, a cure for this terrible disease. I urge your favorable consideration of SJR 14.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Best regards,



Paul Tuss